

**Interreg
Danube Region**



**Co-funded by
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DRP – 3rd Call for Proposals

Call announcement

1. Introduction

Danube Region Programme (DRP) is launching the 3rd targeted Call for Proposals (CfP) for the financial support of the following specific objectives under the programme priorities 1, 2, 3 and 4 : SO1.2, SO2.1, SO2.2, SO2.3, SO3.1, SO3.2, SO4.2.

The programme offers financial support to transnational projects contributing to the development of a more innovative, sustainable and more social Danube Region. The programme has been designed under the territorial cooperation goal of the European Union. The uniqueness of the programme consists of offering a platform for cooperation in strategic areas between EU Member States and non-EU Partner States in the Danube region.

2. Objectives and priorities

DRP supports policy integration in the Danube area through project proposals aimed at contributing to key challenges and opportunities of the region in specific fields of action, below the EU-level (not duplicating efforts in policy integration at the EU-level) and above the national level. Transnational projects should influence national, regional and local policies (as policy drivers).

In order to achieve a higher degree of territorial integration of the very heterogeneous Danube region, the transnational cooperation programme will act as a policy driver aiming to tackle the common challenges and needs deriving from specific policy fields. Therefore, transnational cooperation is expected to deliver tangible results through the development and practical implementation of policy frameworks, tools and services. To this end, the programme seeks to promote concrete pilot initiatives.

The 3rd CfP is open to applicants under the following Specific Objectives: SO1.2, SO2.1, SO2.2, SO2.3, SO3.1, SO3.2, and to SO 4.2 as detailed in the table below:

SO	Status in 3rd Call for Proposals	Available Interreg funds per Priority in EUR	Indicative allocation per SO in EUR
SO 1.1	Closed		
SO 1.2	Open	2,800,000.00	2,800,000.00
SO 2.1	Open	14,500,000.00	4,000,000.00
SO 2.2	Open		5,500,000.00
SO 2.3	Open		5,000,000.00

SO 2.4	Closed		
SO 3.1	Open	6,000,000.00	3,000,000.00
SO 3.2	Open		3,000,000.00
SO 3.3	Closed		
SO 4.2	Open	4,000,000.00	4,000,000.00
Total		27,300,000.00	

The DRP conducted a comprehensive analysis to assess the expected outcomes of the previously approved projects and identify remaining gaps. As a result, the 3rd CfP has been designed as a targeted initiative, encouraging applicants to address specific needs, as explained in detail below.

Specific Objective 1.2 - Development of skills for advancing smart specialisation strategies, industrial transformation and transition towards industry 4.0, including cross-sectorial collaborations

3rd call thematic focus: AI skills development for delivering products and services with transnational impact in the Danube Region

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is transforming industries and redefining how businesses operate globally. In the Danube Region, there is an urgent need to equip organisations with AI-related skills to enhance competitiveness, drive innovation, and ensure sustainable economic growth. This 3rd call thematic scope is also strongly linked to the EC COM (2025) 163 A modernised Cohesion policy: The mid-term review¹ stating that “digitalisation of public services and the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the public and private sectors are levers for competitiveness.

This 3rd CfP is targeting projects that foster AI skills development, enabling primarily public and private non-profit organisations supporting businesses, start-ups, and professionals to leverage AI technologies for transnational collaboration, digital transformation, and creation of high-value products and services.

The **key goals** of SO 1.2 in this CfP are:

¹ [Inforegio - A modernised Cohesion policy: The mid-term review](#)

- Develop AI-related skills that enhance the delivery of transnational products and services by supporting SMEs, start-ups and professionals in adopting AI-driven solutions for business growth
- Integration of existing AI solutions into transnational, digital (data-based) ecosystems that utilise technologies such as IoT (Internet of Things), block chain, XR, digital twins and cloud solutions
- Promote ethical AI, data literacy, and responsible AI development across industries
- Strengthen cooperation between educational institutions, businesses, and policymakers to build an AI-ready workforce
- Foster AI-driven entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystems in the Danube Region
- Development of a common transnational AI competence framework for the Danube Region
- Development and training of methods and tools for SMES in the Danube Region to test and securely operate AI solutions
- Build on AI-oriented existing, complimentary platforms and services, that contribute to the implementation of the Danube strategy

Proposed projects should **focus on some of the following areas:**

- AI ethics and governance: development and training on ethical AI use, bias detection, and regulatory compliance to ensure responsible AI deployment
- AI in entrepreneurship: support for AI start-ups through incubations programs, mentorship, and funding guidance
- Transnational AI collaboration: joint projects between universities, research centres, and businesses to develop transnational solutions related to the use or application of AI such as:
 - AI training and education: development of AI training programmes, workshops, and certification courses for students and professionals
 - AI for business applications: practical training on AI-powered tools for industries such as manufacturing, agriculture and healthcare
 - AI and digital transformation: programs that help organisations integrate AI into their operations to enhance productivity and efficiency
- AI for Sustainability: AI-driven innovations for climate monitoring, smart cities, and sustainable resource management
- Integration of AI solutions into transnational, digital ecosystems

Depending on their objectives, successful projects should demonstrate the following:

- Increased AI literacy and practical AI skills among professionals of public organisations piloted and tested in their role of supporting businesses in delivering transnational products and services
- Development of AI-based learning materials, training platforms, and certification programmes
- Strengthened transnational collaboration in AI research and development
- AI-driven solutions that enhance economic and social development
- Measures that enable SMEs to better utilise AI
- Increased connection of stakeholders with AI experience with SMEs that lack experience
- Cooperation with existing and well-functioning organizational structures under the EU Strategy for Danube Region

Partnership:

Primarily:

- Public institutions, innovation and development agencies
- Universities, research institutes, AI training providers, and innovation labs
- Business support organisations and clusters
- Chambers of commerce and digital economy organisations
- NGOs working in digital skills development

Secondly:

- SMEs, start-ups and industry associations

Specific Objective 2.1 - Support greening the energy and transport sectors in the Danube Region by enhancing the integration of renewable energy sources

3rd call thematic focus: Considering the provisions outlined in the “Energy transition” section of “A modernised Cohesion policy: The mid-term review” (MTR, COM(2025) 163 final) published by the European Commission and taking into account the still growing need for sustainable, renewable energy solutions in line with the IP of the Interreg Danube Region highlights the necessity to define a targeted 3rd call for “**sustainable renewable energy solutions in the context of energy production, heating and cooling systems, grid load, energy communities, district heating and cooling, storage and peak load**”

reduction” directly linked to focus 1 of SO2.1 “Increasing the share of renewable energy in the Danube region”².

To maximise the impact generated by corresponding activities **the call is focused on small and medium municipalities** to motivate them to participate in the energy transition. Applicants are encouraged to make use of the capitalization opportunities with ongoing 1st call projects like Danube geoHeCo, REHEATEAST, StoreMore, ESINERGY, SMEnergy, NRGCOM, and DECA, Danube Indeet who already created topic-wise a good foundation that could possibly be taken up or even developed further. To facilitate financing solutions for relevant investments for small and medium municipalities, initiatives such as the European City Facility (EUCF) - that was set up under the Horizon 2020 Framework Programme for Research and Innovation of the European Union, and is currently being funded as part of the Life Programme - is also recommended.

Partnership:

Primarily:

- Regional and local administrations, municipalities
- Regional and local public institutions
- Development/ investment/ energy agencies
- Service providers and SMEs

Secondly:

- Universities, research institutes
- Business support organizations (e.g. financial/banking associations, chambers)

Specific Objective 2.2 - Promoting climate change adaptation capacities in the Danube Region and disaster management on transnational level in relation to environmental risks taking into account ecosystem-based approaches

3rd call thematic focus: The proposed applications can address the three thematic focuses of SO 2.2, but should **target broader territorial scope beyond the urban, municipal level, where transnational level harmonisation and coordination of forecasting, monitoring, preparedness, or reaction is necessary (targeting the Danube River Basin, or its main sub-basins, or the Danube Region, a thematically reasonable, broad and coherent transnational space within, covering the targeted area in its**

² For each specific objective the Interreg programme, available on the DRP website, defines one or more thematic focuses.

entirety - e.g. a transnational river network, a broad transnational area of DR affected by the same environmental risk with potential transboundary impact) in connection to climate change adaptation and / or climate change induced environmental risks (floods, droughts, wild fires), or accidental pollution of rivers.

Partnerships shall be capable of influencing relevant transnational, national level policies, strategies, or the higher operative levels in the addressed thematic field in all countries of the targeted transnational area.

Primarily:

- national, regional public authorities and organisations responsible for water-flood management, or related environmental issues
- hydro-meteorological services
- disaster management authorities
- professional and volunteer civil protection and rescue organisations

Secondly:

- regional governments
- interest groups including NGOs (e.g. international organisation, environmental organisations)
- research institutions and universities.

Specific Objective 2.3 - Sustainable, integrated, transnational water and sediment management in the Danube River Basin ensuring good quality and quantity of waters and sediment balance

3rd call thematic focus: Proposals can address thematic focus 2 (harmonising management practices between relevant sectors to improve the quality and quantity of transnational water bodies) and thematic focus 3 (transnational coordination of water supply management in transnational river(basin)s) of SO2.3. More specifically, the proposed applications should **target potential impacts of climate change on transnational water management by harmonising and coordinating policy approaches, management practises between water management, agriculture, environment, navigation and hydropower to improve the quantity (and quality) of water in transnational river systems of DRB with key topics in relation to water scarcity, balanced use of water and coordinated management of low-water periods on transnational rivers of DRB (considering also that flood management is related to SO 2.2).** This thematic scope is also in strong connection with the [COM/2025/0084](#)

regulation proposal³, which aligns cohesion policy investments to the new challenges and priorities identified by the mid-term review of the Cohesion Policy, among others adding water resilience to the scope of water management. The geographic scope of the proposals shall be on the whole Danube River Basin, or at least a sufficiently broad part of it, major transnational river(s), river basin and possibly in the entirety of the targeted river basin.

Partnerships shall be capable of influencing relevant transnational, national level policies, strategies, or the higher operative levels in the addressed thematic fields in all countries of the targeted transnational area. This means also that the partnerships shall have balanced mix of relevant organisations from the water management, environmental, inland navigation, agricultural, hydropower plant sectors according to the specific scope of the proposed project.

Primarily:

- national, regional public authorities and organisations of the relevant thematic sectors
- hydro-meteorological services
- infrastructure and (public) service providers (e.g. for water supply, waste-water treatment, hydro power plants, inland navigation)

Secondly:

- interest groups including NGOs from the relevant thematic fields (e.g. international organisation, environmental organisations, farmer associations)
- research and development institutions
- universities

Specific Objective 3.1 - Accessible, inclusive and effective labour markets

3rd call thematic focus: Capacity building for employment support bodies (information and data systems; coordination; training e.g. in social economy).

The context in which employment services are operating in the Danube Region is characterised by rapid change, driven in large part by demographic shifts, migration, digital transformation and the green transition. Consequently, new forms of employment, skills, social attitudes and career paths are needed in the DR to support our labour markets and society more widely. Our aim is to build the capacity of employment services to respond to

³ amending Regulations (EU) 2021/1058 and (EU) 2021/1056 as regards specific measures to address strategic challenges in the context of the mid-term review

the challenges and prepare services in support of effective, agile, inclusive and resilient labour markets. This could include new or improved information and data systems; coordinating structures and processes between services and supporting stakeholders; developing service capacity through innovative training methodologies - for example in social economy, AI, skills assessment, inclusion, etc. Indicative examples from one of the DR challenges, of the type of approaches that could fit within the scope of this specific objective can be seen below.

Indicative examples (non-exhaustive):

- Creation of an information system and support for the provision of information and data about life events connected to the periodic and permanent migration of workforce, caused by labour market inequalities between the eastern and the western parts of the macro region
- Build-up of a “Danube observatory system” about labour migration and its impacts on cohesion, involving public bodies responsible for monitoring and evaluation, academia and civil society

Partnership:

- public employment services
- employment support bodies
- universities and research organisations
- science parks
- companies, chambers and their associations
- social partners
- sector skills councils
- national and regional authorities and development agencies
- schools
- minority representative organisations

Specific Objective 3.2 - Accessible and inclusive quality services in education, training and lifelong learning

Vocational education and training systems demonstrate a range of approaches in the fourteen countries of the Danube Region (DR), varying based on national and regional policies, cultural values, and economic and social needs. However, significant common connections and challenges bind labour markets, supportive VET systems, providers and

learners together. These include demographic change, migration, digital transformation and the green transition, which are all testing the agility of VET systems to meet the needs of changing labour markets and society. The Danube Region Programme recognises the importance of addressing this with transnational partnerships to complement national, regional and local initiatives. Working through Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs), the programme seeks to do this with two approaches. One strategic and one more operational.

In considering CoVEs, the programme recognises that there is not a single uniform accepted definition of a CoVE, but it considers all of the following characteristics to be important in CoVE identification:

- recognised in its field as high-quality VET provision
- role in promoting regional development and employment
- local skills ecosystem: hub for innovation and knowledge transfer, and fostering
- collaboration between education, businesses, the community, public administration and other stakeholders
- connected and active internationally

Well-considered applications should create a differentiated understanding in terms of their CoVE identification as opposed to the more standard VET providers/provision.

The programme also considers excellence in the context of CoVEs as a wide-reaching and inclusive concept of skills provision which encompasses pedagogy, social justice, lifelong learning, transversal skills, organization, innovation, continuing professional education and community needs⁴.

3rd call thematic focus 1:

To strengthen Danube Region strategic approaches in **support of Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) in the Danube Region**.

A Danube Region strategic support approach for CoVEs should build on the work of the existing EUSDR Danube Region Platform on Centres of Vocational Excellence/Policy Platform for CoVEs started in 2021 [Danube Region Platform on Centres of Vocational Excellence - EUSDR - Danube Strategy Point](#). A Danube Region project(s) could complement and further develop this initiative with a more coordinating/operational approach, which could include:

- Pilot programmes of work with a transnational character on specific areas of work, e.g. internationalization of CoVEs, CoVEs and social inclusion, public private partnerships; CoVEs and smart specialization; lifelong learning

⁴ [Centres of Vocational Excellence: An engine for vocational education and training development | ETF](#)

- Creating networks, forums and working groups on specific themes connecting VET policy makers and providers with companies and industry representatives across the Danube Region
- Developing a support function for the understanding, guidance and complementarity of different programmes in the Danube Region supporting CoVEs (national, regional, transnational)
- Awareness and capacity building programmes for CoVEs in the Danube Region
- Strategic CoVE development in fields of transnational interest across the Danube Region

Partnership:

- VET providers including schools
- tertiary education institutions
- research institutions
- science parks
- companies, chambers and their associations
- social partners
- sector skills councils
- national and regional authorities and development agencies
- public employment services
- minority representative organisations

Note:

- Partnerships are strongly encouraged to consult with the EUSDR PAC 9 and to complement the work of PAC 9 and that of other relevant organisations/initiatives such as the European Training Foundation (ETF) and Erasmus+.

3rd call thematic focus 2:

The development of existing CoVEs or new CoVEs - developing their excellence potential⁵

⁵ [Centres of Vocational Excellence: An engine for vocational education and training development | ETF](#)

Projects should develop on one or more of the following directions:

- CoVE focussed initiatives to modernise and transform the quality of VET systems to strategically support social, economic and pedagogical changes and challenges, e.g. new skill needs in the context of the green and digital transition
- The formation of multilevel Public Private Partnerships for VET and skills development
- Actions aimed towards embedding CoVEs in local innovation ecosystems and connecting them at the Danube level
- Facilitating the bringing together of CoVEs that share a common interest in specific sectors and innovative approaches to tackling societal challenges e.g. social inclusion, green skills, digitalisation, AI, upskilling individuals with low qualification levels, etc.

Partnership:

- VET providers including schools
- tertiary education institutions
- research institutions
- science parks
- companies, chambers and their associations
- social partners
- sector skills councils
- national and regional authorities and development agencies
- public employment services

Notes:

- Project approaches towards VET should be sufficiently flexible to reflect the diversity of VET systems across the Danube Region
- Project approaches should take into consideration existing initiatives of relevance e.g. Erasmus +, ETF and national/local initiatives
- Upward convergence. This is of particular interest, even more so from peripheral regions of the Danube Region
- Social inclusion is an important consideration

Specific Objective 4.2 - Increased institutional capacities for territorial and macro-regional governance

Four 3rd call thematic focuses have been identified for specific objective 4.2. Applicants are not requested to address all the four thematic focuses of the 3rd call, but they shall concentrate on and demonstrate in their application strong contribution to at least one thematic focus. Addressing two or more thematic focuses is not considered an advantage for the applicant and will not lead to additional points automatically since the assessment considers the quality of the proposal in its entirety.

3rd call thematic focus 1: Tackling the accelerated territorial peripheralization/polarization within the Danube Region and promoting balanced territorial and social-economic development, considering main demographic developments and recent technological advances

Increasing regional disparities are a specific feature of the Danube Region and closely connected to beneath working demographic trends like brain drain, depopulation or deterioration of rural and remote areas. In addition, recent technological advances have the potential to further “fuel” the already ongoing territorial polarization. These inter-linked phenomena are not only aggravating the living-conditions in wide areas of the Danube Region and for certain demographic groups (e.g. youth, elderly or low-qualified workers) but are affecting the (global) competitiveness of the Danube Region as such. Projects tackling single aspects in this field have been (successfully) realised, yet a much broader and comprehensive strategic initiatives are needed for filling evidence gaps, defining a common territorial vision and introducing targeted and sustainable measures for mitigating or reversing existing mis-developments.

Main activities shall be grouped around improving and transnationally harmonizing the evidence-base in relation to the topics concerned, a better and more effective alignment of policies needed for counter-balancing the accelerated polarisation within the Danube region and the empowerment of local actors for successfully testing and implementing sustainable solutions. **Main outputs and results** shall cover a governance model vertically and horizontally integrating core-actors in the field concerned, evidence-based and transnationally applicable policy documents as well as tools and action plans for their local implementation.

Partnership:

- national/regional ministries responsible for regional development
- national and/or regional statistical offices as well local public bodies

3rd call thematic focus 2: Making local (and regional) public governance systems more resilient to crisis-situations (“crisis proof”)

The COVID pandemic and the war in Ukraine showed that crisis-situations not known for decades (or not known at all) suddenly can become real and influence basically all spheres of life. A specific contribution of SO4.2 in this context could consist in developing a framework for improving capacities for the crisis-preparedness especially of local public bodies in fields such as civil protection, maintaining critical infrastructure, dealing with destabilizing actions like cyber-attacks or misinformation and providing vital public services.

Main activities shall tackle the analysis of crisis-scenarios especially in view of capacities needed for ensuring an adequate preparedness of local actors in the most vital fields, the creation of transnational coordination mechanisms in the field concerned. **The main outputs and results** are to be seen in an integrated transnational governance system for crisis-preparedness overcoming the existent fragmentation (in terms key-actors, frameworks and mechanisms) along “traditional” intervention fields like health, environment or safety.

Partnership:

Primarily:

- local public bodies
- local (public, private or civic) actors involved in civil protection or disaster management
- infrastructure operators from the local level

Secondly:

- academic and expert-type bodies (for better understanding the vulnerability of the local level vis-à-vis the multifaceted and interlinked threads).
- relevant regional and national bodies (for updating policy frameworks and aligning them with a transnational perspective)

3rd call thematic focus 3: Innovating and optimizing models of effectively involving citizens in transnational, multi-level territorial planning processes and promoting sustainable democracy

Models of local self-government and community engagement are multifaceted and have a long tradition in the Danube Region. Yet the big picture shows that many of Europe’s “low-trust-societies” with a low level of active participation in civil society are concentrated on this cooperation area. Larger strategic initiatives are an adequate tool for pooling existing experiences and key-actors and for introducing and testing new models. Whereas democratic participation in general decision making and territorial planning processes can be seen as the core-challenge in this field, new emerging phenomena (like the need for

improved media literacy for confronting disinformation campaigns and fake news spreading through digital media) shall be considered too, not only, but also because they affect in particular the youth.

Main activities shall focus on the creation and testing of new models for local civic participation or the role – potentials, limitations, risks – of new technological phenomena like social media or AI in increasing institutional trust in the Danube Region. **The main output/result** envisaged is a platform acting as an incubator for innovating participation models and tools and for boosting the cooperation among key civic actors across the cooperation area.

Partnership:

Primarily:

- organisations and initiatives representing the civil society, ideally with cross-border or transnational outreach

Secondly:

- local public bodies as providers of the enabling environment needed for improved civic participation
- relevant policy drivers from the national and regional level

3rd call thematic focus 4: Strengthening transnational capacities of public local and regional governance systems for ensuring the functioning of Global / European / Danubian Value Chains

The war in Ukraine highlighted the complex connections within global value chains and how disruptions in one area can affect different sectors and regions across the EU. The Danube Region – as Europe’s macro-region directly neighbouring a geopolitically more and more instable space – is both more exposed to threads resulting from recent developments and can at the same time contribute more and more directly to overcome (or mitigate) these threads. S.O.4.2 could offer a platform for tackling a specific aspect in this context, i.e. the role of local and regional governments in their interaction with businesses and civil actors for ensuring an effective and sustainable functioning of vital value chains.

Main activities shall aim at analysing the vulnerability of crucial value chains from a transnational perspective and the role of local public bodies for ensuring their effective functioning. **The main output/result** is to be seen in the creation of a coordination mechanism for Danubian value chains and increased capacities of local public bodies for sustaining critical value chains.

Partnership:

- local public bodies

- business support organisations
- main economic policy drivers

3. Funds allocated for the call and co-financing

The programme will allocate for this 3rd call for proposals up to EUR **27 300 000.00** of the DRP's Interreg funds.

The maximum EU contribution to the projects is a co-financing rate of 80%.

4. Eligibility of expenditure

The following cost categories are eligible for the 3rd call for proposals:

1. Staff costs
2. Office and administration
3. Travel and accommodation. The travel costs are reimbursed based on the flat rate of 15% of the staff costs. Real costs option can be chosen in fully justified cases. Such possible justified cases can be (non-exhaustive list): PPs from not easily accessible areas, impossibility to plan and reimburse staff costs due to internal institutional rules etc.
4. External expertise and services
5. Equipment
6. Infrastructure and works

5. Options for budget structure

When preparing the budget, applicants may make use of the different simplified cost options used by the programme. Applicants may opt for any of the budget structures outlined in the table below:

Options	Real costs	Flat rates
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff costs • External expertise and services • Equipment • Infrastructure and works 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Office and administration <i>15 % flat rate of eligible direct Staff costs</i> • Travel and accommodation <i>15 % flat rate of eligible direct Staff costs (real costs only in exceptional cases⁶)</i>

⁶ For details, please check Chapter 2.2.3 of the Manual on Eligibility of Expenditure

2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> External expertise and services Equipment Infrastructure and works 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff costs <i>20 % flat rate of eligible direct costs</i> Office and administration <i>15 % flat rate of eligible Staff costs</i> Travel and accommodation <i>15 % flat rate of eligible Staff costs (real costs only in exceptional cases⁶)</i>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All other costs: office and administration, travel and accommodation, external expertise and services, equipment and infrastructure and works <i>40 % flat rate of eligible direct Staff costs</i>

6. Timeframe

The call is open from the 22 September 2025 until the 15 December 2025.

The 3rd call for proposals of the Danube Region Programme is organised according to a one-step procedure where the applicants have to submit an application package including a fully developed Application Form (AF).

The Application Form (AF) has to be submitted to the joint secretariat through Jems **by 15 December 2025, 14:00 Central European Time (CET).**

An earlier submission of the documents is recommended.

7. Duration of projects

The duration of projects must not exceed **30 months**. This limit applies for the operational phase of the project and does not comprise the preparation phase. The estimated starting date of the projects is July 2026.

8. Lead Partner principle

Each project has to appoint a lead partner (LP) who is responsible for preparation and submission of the application form as lead applicant. In case of approval of the project, the lead partner takes over the full responsibility for management, communication, implementation, and coordination of activities among the involved partners. The lead partner bears legal responsibility for the whole partnership. The lead partner is also the link between the project and the managing authority/joint secretariat (MA/JS) of the programme.

The following types of entities can be **lead partners**:

- Local, regional, national public bodies/ bodies governed by public law (including EGTCs in the meaning of Article 2(16) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)
- International organisations

- Private **non-profit** bodies

The LP can be either from a DRP EU Member State or from a DRP non-EU Partner State.

EXCEPTION: in the 3rd call for proposals applicants coming from Ukraine can participate only as project partners.

9. Eligible partners

The following types of entities, officially registered in the programme area⁷, are eligible to apply as project partners:

- Local, regional, national public bodies/ bodies governed by public law (including EGTCs - in the meaning of Article 2(16) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 - registered in one country of the programme area)
- International organisations
- Private bodies (non-profit organisations and private enterprises / private profit-making organisations)

10. Partnership requirements

The programme covers 14 countries, 9 of them are EU Member States (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Hungary, Germany: Baden Württemberg and Bavaria, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia) and 5 Candidate Countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia and Ukraine with four provinces: Chernivetska Oblast, Ivano-Frankiviska Oblast, Zakarpatska Oblast, Odessa Oblast⁸). As a general rule, EU financing is only provided to project partners located in the programme area⁹.

Each project has to involve at least **three directly financed project partners from three different countries¹⁰** of the programme area: the lead partner and at least two project partners. At least one project partner has to be located on the territory of an EU Member State of the programme area. **Involvement of project partners coming from non-EU**

⁷ Exceptions for geographic eligibility described in detail in section II.1.3 of the DRP Applicant's Manual

⁸ DRP will cover the entire territory of Ukraine provided that the part of the operations implemented outside programme area (the UA regions not officially involved in the programme) directly contribute to the objectives of the programme. (Reg. (EU) 2021/1059, Art.37)

⁹ Exemptions from this rule may apply to partners in Germany and Ukraine are specified in the Applicants Manual (under II.1.3.).

¹⁰ The size of the partnership should reflect the scope of the project and remain manageable. The average number of partners in transnational projects is approx. 10-15 partners from 7-12 countries

Partner States is strongly supported by the programme and is subject to quality assessment.

Applicants located outside the programme area but within the EU are not eligible to apply for funding as project partners in the 3rd call, but can be involved as Associated Strategic Partners.

11. Call documents

The following documents, part of the application package, are compulsory to be submitted by **15 December 2025, 14:00 CET**:

- Online Application Form
- Declaration of co-financing (for all directly financed partners)
- State aid declaration (for all directly financed partners)
- Partnership Agreement
- Declaration for International Organisations (only if applicable)
- Associated strategic partner (ASP) declaration (only if applicable)
- LP confirmation and signature

The annexes of the application form listed above are to be signed, stamped, if applicable, by the legal representative of the respective entity and the scanned versions of each document are to be uploaded to the Application annexes section in Jems.

12. Programme language

The official language of the programme is English. Therefore, all communication between applicants and the MA/JS is carried out in English. This requirement applies to the information provided in the application form as well as to all official correspondence.

13. Relevant documents

The application package and all relevant information about the programme are available on the programme website: <http://www.interreg-danube.eu>.

The following official programme documents are to be read before the submission of a proposal:

- **Danube Region Programme document (IP)**
- **Applicants' Manual (Version 1.3, September 2025)**
- **Manual on Eligibility of Expenditure (Version 2.2, September 2025)**
- **Guidelines for filling in the AF (Version September 2025)**
- **How to develop a transnational project**

The programme provides tools (e.g. individual consultations) and events (e.g. thematic seminars, info days) to facilitate the generation of project proposals and to support applicants in the project proposals development process.

Before developing a project proposal, it is highly recommended to read focus defined for each SO (as presented in point 2 of the present call announcement) to make sure that the focus of the proposal fits the call for proposals.

For general advice on the programme, the call, the eligibility requirements and on the national rules, please contact your [National Contact Point](#).

For advices related to the thematic scope of the project and the thematic alignment of the project to the call requirements, please contact danube@interreg-danube.eu or address the MA/ JS project officer responsible for the coordination of the topic (more information is found on the programme website - <https://interreg-danube.eu/contact-us>). An early consultation with the relevant project officer is strongly recommended in order to clarify the suitability of the project idea at an early stage and to avoid unnecessary efforts.